

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

Rita Moreno, Actress



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No one's going to tell me how to make my own choices. For too many years, everybody told me what to say and what to do and how to be.

1 Do you know what a stereotype is? It is a common belief about a group of people. A stereotype can be based on images or ideas. It is a type of prejudice. An example of a stereotype is the belief that all girls are bad at sports and all boys are great at sports. The problem with stereotypes is that people judge others without getting to know them. Rita Moreno has had to fight against stereotypes since she was a young girl.

2 Rita Moreno was born in Puerto Rico in 1931. She moved to the United States with her mother when she was five. Rita loved dancing and acting. After taking lessons in dancing, she started auditioning for shows on Broadway. When she was just 13 years old, she earned a role in the Broadway Show, *Skydrift*.

3 When Rita was 17 years old she acted in her first movies. This led to a 7-year contract with MGM studios. Her big break was a role in the 1961 movie, *Westside Story*. Rita won an Oscar Award for Best Supporting Actress becoming the first Latina actress to win an Oscar.

4 But Rita was not happy with acting in movies. She was only given stereotypical ethnic roles. She was often asked to speak with an accent. This upset her. Rita said, "They made me use an accent, which I wasn't thrilled about because a lot of us, obviously, don't have them." She decided to stop making movies.

5 For seven years, Rita performed on stage. She had roles in London and New York City. She then decided to return to making movies, as well as, working in television. She worked on the PBS

show, *The Electric Company* from 1971-1977. She also was the voice of Carmen Sandiego in the animated show *Where In The World Is Carmen Sandiego?*

6 Rita Moreno is the first Latina to win an Oscar, a Tony, a Grammy, and Emmy. She has also been awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2004 and the National Medal of Arts in 2009.

7 Rita Moreno has also been involved in community and cultural events. She was involved in the 1963 March of Washington. She has been involved in improving racial equality, reducing hunger, and increasing early childhood education.

8 Moreno continues to work as an actress. Her most recent role is on Netflix's *One Day At A Time*. She also continues to work on bringing racial equality to our country. She recently said, "What I say to my gente [people] is to hang on, and to remember who they are, be proud of who they are, and keep talking. And keep complaining, and just don't ever — don't give up. That's always been my motto anyway. My motto has always been "persevere" — *perseverancia*. And that's what we need to do."¹

¹Garcia-Navarro, Lulu. *Rita Moreno To 'My Gente': Be Proud Of Who You Are, And Don't Give Up*, NPR Weekend Edition Sunday, May 13, 2018. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2018/05/13/610407259/rita-moreno-to-my-gente-be-proud-of-who-you-are-don-t-give-up> on July 7, 2020.

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No one's going to tell me how to make my own choices. For too many years, everybody told me what to say and what to do and how to be.

1. Explain how paragraphs 1 and 7 are related to each other.

2. Why do you think Rita returned to making movies and acting on television?

3. Read the following passage. What can you infer about Rita's character?

She has been involved in improving racial equality, reducing hunger, and increasing early childhood education.

5. Summarize Rita's life in one sentence.
